

Southdown



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Southdowns are the oldest breed in the Down family, a group developed in southern and southwestern England during the 18th century. Southdowns formed the breeds' common foundation.* All of the Down breeds have colored faces and legs. Southdowns' coloring is the most subtle. Top-quality Southdowns were imported into the U.S. in the first half of the 19th century.

Breeder preferences for the

sizes of Southdowns have gone through shifts in both the U.S. and the U.K., as well as other places where the breed has been established. Wool from all the strains is similar. Most of it is next-to-skin soft. For the most part staples are on the short side. Classic

<i>Suggested weight in pounds</i>	Rams	Ewes
U.S. Southdowns	190–230	130–180
U.K. Southdowns	155	110
U.S. Babydoll Southdowns	60–125	60–125

preparation and spinning follows woolen procedures, producing lofty yarns that are cozy because they trap air between the fibers. Worsted-style preparation and spinning increases durability and results in a smoother fabric.

In common with the other Down wools, Southdown resists felting to the extent that fabrics are likely to be naturally machine washable and dryable. In short, trying to felt Southdown wool will waste energy. Instead, use these fleeces to make terrifically practical socks, mittens, sweaters, and blankets.

* The six Down breeds are Dorset Down, Hampshire, Oxford, Shropshire, Southdown, and Suffolk. Of these, all but Dorset Down exist in North America, and all but Hampshire and Suffolk are rare breeds.

Fleece weight	There's a lot of size variety among different strains. 4–6 pounds (2–2.5 kg) to 7–12 pounds (3–5.5 kg); a working average of 5–8 pounds (2.5–3.5 kg); yield 40–55 percent.
Staple length	1½–4 inches (3.5–10 cm), mostly 2–3 inches (5–7.5 cm).
Fiber diameters	23–29 microns for white; 27–31 microns for black.
Lock characteristics	Dense, resilient, medium-grade, with blocky, rectangular staples that hold together and may be hard to distinguish.
Natural colors	White. There may be some darker fibers in a white fleece, and there are colored Southdowns.



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